

St. Andrews College Press

Gravity Hill



Gravity Hill

Magazine

Jennifer Johnson, Editor
Ron Bayes, Advisor

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Dedicated to

Robert Creeley

May 21, 1926 to March 30, 2005

An inspiration to us all.

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Editor's Note

This is the first edition of Gravity Hill. The concept of Gravity Hill was developed over a period of time and through different people involved with St. Andrews Press over the last few years. I think that each person had something different in mind for Gravity Hill, but the main concept stayed the same: promotion of student work. St. Andrews has attracted many talented people and continues to do so. Gravity Hill was created primarily so that these people could showcase their talents. As of now, Gravity Hill will be comprised of current and past students and faculty, alumni, and others that have had involvement with St. Andrews College and Press. The editor will be a current student of St. Andrews, and the magazine entirely student produced under the advising of a faculty member. It is my hope that what we have started here will continue for many years. St. Andrews Press used to publish the St. Andrews Review, while Cairn was started to fill a role much like Gravity Hill. Cairn eventually replaced the St. Andrews Review, and there was nothing left to fill the hole. Gravity Hill is intended for that spot, with a slightly different spin than before. Student work will be shown side by side with published authors, the common theme being St. Andrews. Gravity Hill was named for a place of local legend here in Laurinburg, North Carolina. Many towns have their own so-called ghost stories and legends. It is my hope that this magazine will develop its own legend in time. With the help of students, alumni, and, of course, the readers, Gravity Hill can grow and prosper. A huge thanks goes out to all the contributors, especially the alumni.

I hope that you all enjoy the show.

Jennifer Johnson
Editor, Gravity Hill

Jesús I. González

A Window to a Room

A Moor sitting at the door,
Rainbow turtles,
Brown elephants,
Green letters,
Red robots,
Blue birds,
Yellow men,
Aqua guns,
Stories on the wall,
Clear wine,
Bats, cages and Faces,
Light from the black,
A window to a room.

Jesús I. González

Three We Are

Three we are,
Three we will be,
One with the gift of the pen,
One with the gift of numbers,
One with the gift of speech,
Three we are,
Three we will be,
One with desire to live with passion,
One with desire to live with power,
One with desire to live free from care,
Three we are,
Three we will be,
Happy we three are,
Happy the two who brought us are,
Bliss for the three that came to brighten the life of the two,
Three we are,
Three we will be,
Though we Three will be in singular places,
We Three will always be,

Andrea Eaton

Water God's Winter II

Waves of snow
Spray tiny shards
On white ocean
Whips as they drift,
Stings without salt
Whitecaps captured
Motionless, silent
Engulf concave islands,
Nests under saplings
Of maple and pine.

Infant shrubs buoy and peak
Seen and unseen
In the slowly shifting winter tide.

Cere's grieving sway
Nursery cold
Slowly breathing
Disturbed only slightly
Only briefly
From horse and rider
Cresting the still swells
In a shallow sea towards home.

Andrea Eaton

Ghazal for Sudden Verse
(first line from Don McLean's The Grave)

The grave that they dug him had flowers
A tombstone's corsage, pale sad flowers

In birth he fell from his mother's womb
Found the world through that false glad flower

In accident slips, through drowning seized lilies
Losing Ophelia gained water-clad flowers

On cheeks wild roses, passion firing up hate
Sanguine lashes bloom poison's mad flowers

Sleep, a neat guard of white stones stand ready
In file allow, only the waking add flowers

Andrea Eaton

Water God's Winter I

Past panes of frozen vapor filigree
Great thick narwhal horns
Hang from liminal barriers,
Aimed towards a snowy depth
And for a season, plunge.

Courtney Butler

Pieces of Autumn

I picked a handful of Fall today
Berries red, golden bright
Leaves falling, ashen cedar
A touch of laughter, lonely light

I picked a handful of Fall today
And forgot how the world still turns
For Winter will come another day
But now I will bathe
In the golden light of russet fey

Today I picked a handful of Fall
And left all the pieces where I stepped
Reminding others that Summer is gone
And Spring will only come if
Darkness will give up his bride, his pawn

Because I picked a handful of fall today
And finally lost myself in the pure joy
Of finally, finally
Falling completely away

Courtney Butler

Love

your lips were upon me
you rise to greet me
I touch my tongue with yours
and taste myself
in your mouth

maybe this is what
love should be
...finding yourself in someone else
and learning to crave the flavor



Jennifer Sheehan
Tranquility
conte crayon on paper

and explain
Tell me the story
the story of life
Can you hear me?
I'm in the dark
Can you see me ?
I am alone
Why can't you tell me?
the story of life
explain to me
don't leave me
take me with you
don't leave me hear
wait
don't leave me in the dark
tell me a story
don't go
Don't leave me!

Alone in the dark I sit
waiting for a story to be told
tell me a story
the story of life
the way I think and feel
tell me
tell me
tell me before I disappear
leaving reality and never returning to
tell me a story, of the future
and how it comes to be
wait don't go
stay with me
don't leave me

Alone in the Dark.

Ron Bayes

New Take on the Ides

I'm at a loss
for more than words
puzzling on you.
In my mind, my eyes
flash as they would have,
at your age, say Chita
Rivera or Ricardo Montalban.

Wrong side of the ocean?
So what? Let memory loose
and let the wedding totter
on the bumpy lawn,
Ali Baba. Let the tape
blurt scratchy Disney disco!

New lamps for the old?
Darn right! Let the
legend's moral turn round,
round as an orange;
round as the hiss of ocean,
soft as the hiss of "yes."

Jency Bennitt

Alone

Tell a story
that comes from within
the way I think and feel
Can someone hear me?
Anyone?
tell me why
Why, I'm alone?
Can you see me?
I'm in the dark
come with me

Marion Jones in a reality race.
While ascending to the dream with Maya Angelou,
African Bambata rocked the party and the soul
Dropping lessons for the next generation
that Mos Def took for his to hold.
Rasputin tried to kill me
along with Anastasia
But we made a spot for him
in the deepest pits of hell.
Pontius Pilot couldn't save Jesus
but if he had,
Who would have saved us?

Gilbert Abraham

Angel of Death

At the end of the world I saw death
creeping upon the innocent child
in grubby shredded clothes

Azrail loomed around her
some offered gold
others their souls – still

Azrail took the child
and drowned her in
her own consumption

Gilbert Abraham

Dream Too

On route to Damascus
God struck me
Reminiscing Saul's transformation
to the prophet Paul
Stood beside David Koresh
as the flames rose
And the Space ship didn't stop.
Joined the police academy
with Bubba Smith,
While Bob Hope
beat the president in golf,
Fought courageously
against the angel of death,
As Abe Lincoln was martyred.
We talked as Kevin Spacey
filmed the 7 deadly sins,
Almost drowned with Jonah
in the hands of the sea
and with Pinocchio
inside Monstro the whale.
But cowboys will always
be steadfast to the needy
and with blazing saddle and whip
came Pecos Bill upon the eye of a tornado,
but I escaped underground
with Harriet Tubman,
she's one rock solid woman.

From slavery back to freedom,
to shields and spears
when regimented battle was broken,
Gave Shaka Zulu the advice
While Medgar Evers and I rolled dice,
Then sprinting to the beach
crept upon the Pacific Ocean with Heath Carelocke,
before his acclaim to fame,
Sat behind James Melcher all the way to the sun,
While Jeffery Dahmer ate chillren's chitlin's,
the horror of wickedness has me beating

Contributor's Notes

Current St. Andrews Students: Jency Bennitt, Courtney Butler, Jesús I. González, Noelle Hartbarger, Elizabeth Jones, Ben Johnson, Jennifer Johnson, Casey Kallenberg, Matt Lawson, April Link, Kime Neal, Sean O'Donnell, Andrew Potter, Andy Reynolds, Sarah Rhodes, Kelly Rothlisberger, J.A.W. Shroeter, Jennifer Sheehan, Ian Wallace, Tyler Williams

Alumni of St. Andrews: Gilbert Abraham, Andrea Eaton, Kemp Gregory, Jeremy Halinen

Faculty and Other Students: Ron Bayes, Jean Arthur Jones, Matthew White

when we found a broken
wing on the dunes today,
my own limb throbbed.

Elizabeth Jones

Exposed

There I stood
Looking out into the distance
Out into the world beyond
Forever.
No end in sight
I strolled along
Admiring the beauty all around
Listening.
The breeze blowing through the trees
The birds sing their beautiful songs
Water delicately rippling over the rocks
Suddenly.
Something caught my eye
Filled with perfection
My eyes widened in wonder
Red.
It beckoned me
Drawing me in
Its subtle scent wafting up to my nose
Whispers.
Something else was there
It called to me
A comforting voice
Slithering.
I saw it through the leaves
It came closer
Still soothing me with its words
Persuading.
Showing me a glimpse into the world beyond
It told me everything would be okay
Saying it would fill that void
Convinced.
I reached out my hand

Lindsay Hess

Morning Light

A woman picks screwdrivers off the sidewalk,
ancient Terra Cotta horses gallop
down Hollywood Road
and I wake to shrill Cantonese
arguing 10 flights below me, on the street,
to a room where a photograph of my father
standing half cocked an ready to pitch
in a Phoenixville baseball jersey
faces off with a young Jackie Chan.

This is Hong Kong.

Lindsay Hess

Kitty Hawk

In a dream
I found the broken
pieces of me, wind scattered across
the dunes, my feathers,
wine soaked and bruised.

Sleep caught—
stifling your throat
you ask once more
how I could have mangled
my desire so ferociously.

I didn't tell you—
he recited poetry about
his mother's hips, like
a bend in the river, sang
the same sad old bluegrass song, watched
me dance in the kitchen, all shy.

I couldn't tell you...
only that



Lindsay Hess
Hasta La Victoria Siempre
Black and White Photograph

Noelle Hartbarger

For Opening Nights

Yellow roses in my jumbo plastic Twizzlers box
 I have no vase
Meals of bread rolls and cereal and ginger ale to staunch nausea
 Bumming cigarettes because suddenly I've
Started chain-smoking. Again.
 Tears to myself but
Placid unruffled composure on-stage
 Pats on my back
While my teacher admonishes "...wasn't in your nature to skip
class..."
 Dry heaves and late scrawled papers written on a shabby
script
Bags underneath my eyes underneath layers of
 Beige pancake makeup

...in the mirror, blank and ready for emotions to be played upon
 is a very pale china doll
 a bare-slated girl

 loved and gently used by you.

Noelle Hartbarger

The Shedding of a Name

the shedding of a name...

the papery crust, creping off like rice wrapping on a fortune cookie

even as a child, I knew there was power in words

Power in Names.

to my mother's despair, I insisted at 6 that my name was "Ida"
(who knows why)

maybe because all other names I knew were owned...
so reluctant to use a name for fear it is another's.

I saw you can change with your name, for better or for worse

what a circle of cycle of chaos and confusion, of borrowing and
lending,
of references and inferred meanings.

Oh, let me be "she-who-must-not-be-named"
instead of these small and vicious viscous categories.

Noelle Hartbarger

Everyday Ardor

On a bench in Boston Common
a stranger, brown-papered whiskey bottle in hand,
told me to fall in love every chance I get
I was disenchanted 'til I realized what he meant

So I fell in love

with the grocery cashier
who shyly eyed me under thick glasses, carefully packed my bags.
with that boy from my class
the one with sunstreaked hair and careful comments of Monet.
with the gentle faced stranger on the street
her sleepy eyes and ready smile.

and I'm falling in love with you.
You, who considers my words
Who curls your tongue around my rough words

Who fingers my pages

A romantic

A cynic

A critic

You who never let yourself believe
Love is so simple, humanly possible and uncomplicated.
It occurs with the ease of puffed breath
quicker than a skeptic can cough.

Jeremy Hal'nen

In A Waking Dream

if we could kill ourselves
to make a point.

i miss you.

if we could come back
and you'd be here.

Jeremy Hal'nen

Sitting On You

We fit together like
pieces of a two-piece
puzzle that is no
longer a puzzle because
it is put together.

Kemp Gregory

Ants, or a Spot Revisited

Yesterday, on my morning
Life-stroll, I passed
A pencil-sized snake
– half of a pencil,
really – in the signature
“S” position, miniscule
head slightly up, poised
as if able to launch
a pavement

attack. 24 hours
later, I’m back
on the same circle
beat, but the warrior
is nowhere in sight:
instead (in the identical
sidewalk spot),
thousands of busy red
dots form the first

dwindling letter of a word
your mother never meant,
like “Sorry.”



Lindsay Hess
Fishmonger
Black and White Photograph

Three we are,
Three we will remain,
For we Three are One...in life and death,
Three we are,
Three we shall be.

Jennifer Johnson

Because Eyelids Are Not Essential

I knew a girl once
who killed herself
because she did too much.
she worked all day
and stayed out all night
and never slept.
they found her
knife in one hand,
her eyelids in the other.
some say she was afraid to sleep.
but eyelids are not essential.

Jennifer Johnson

Fragment – Hands

I washed my hands
in the sink,
wiped them on the towel
over and over
until they were dry.
but I could not stop there.
I wiped
and rubbed
the skin started tearing
I scratched
and scraped
the blood started flowing
dripping
pooling at my feet.
I pulled my nails off
and they fell into the
Red Sea
like tiny sailboats.

Jennifer Johnson

On the Bench

One day I met a man
 named Sordello
 lovely fellow
Except I can't remember
 a damn thing about him.
I listened to him rant and rave—
 "Dove es mio frittella vaporosa?"
 Where is my fluffy pancake? I didn't understand.
So he gave me a book and told me to read.
With that—he left.

I read about Odysseus
 I heard o' him before
And a few others—
 Venus—sucks for her
 married to Hephaestus but doing Ares
 (I'd pick Ares too)
And Confucius, also called Kung—
 said things that made sense
But then I ran into this Dante guy,
 he said, "Io venni in luogo d'ogni luce muto."
 Began to think I went to hell too.

Ain't there anyone "thet kan speak ENGLISH?"
 I yelled.
"Pound! Pound! Come lead me
 from this place,
 tell me how I got here to begin with!"

Pound never came himself,
 but an old woman—spoke like him,
 kinda looked like him in the face too—
 came to me—led me through
 back to the bench where
 I met Sordello.
"Sordello!" she says, "I know him,
 Let me tell you about him."
I smiled, thanked her and said,
 "Can't be lost with a guide, I guess."

Reality of limits

Where were you all along?
I knew the song

I'm the guy in your car
Lounging at the bar
Makin' those remarks

They were sweet
They were kind
And you will, you will you will line
Up and knock me to my door
Asking for an answer
And I'll give a reply

"Be like Mike and be like Jordan
will you knock me on your feet?
Get up, get up, get up, get up, get up, get up, get up, get up!"

Limes went astray
Echoed in decay
Makes you wanna stay...clean

All o' sudden
glue up your nose
to some coke
you found inside a rose
iced out

in your hand

We're all damned to oblivion
Was that pavilion showing our cards?

Deal with the hand that's given
Never making up our livin'
Knowing where it's going

Knowing how to get there
Knowing what it takes to reach the otherside

Our lives are made thick
With our hearts caught in the mix
Of some worldly travesty

Let us see
Where we'll be
In a year we'll know our

Destiny forever
Maybe not forever
But close to the end

Infinite numbers taking our surprise
A little too far
Known as a vision
We will know the course
Final jury of decision
may collisions make us safe from our own

Reality of life

Jean Arthur Jones

For Hilda Morley

“Pity the old
for they can remember
when it was/otherwise.”

The only feeling
the length of breezes
across your face,
a part, but not part,
that volcano beyond your window,
the houses that have crumbled across the street –
You hold out your arm:
Yes, I was only that long in 1964,
now I am bigger,
bigger than you,
and you,
you are waiting beside your window
in your old house
in Padang Panjang:
You have seen me come, come from America,
and I have touched you – What else is there, grandmamma?
What else is there?

Ben Johnson

Attitudes Of Solitude

Flash camera faced
Attitudes of solitude
Maker of my madness
Shaker of my laughless...life

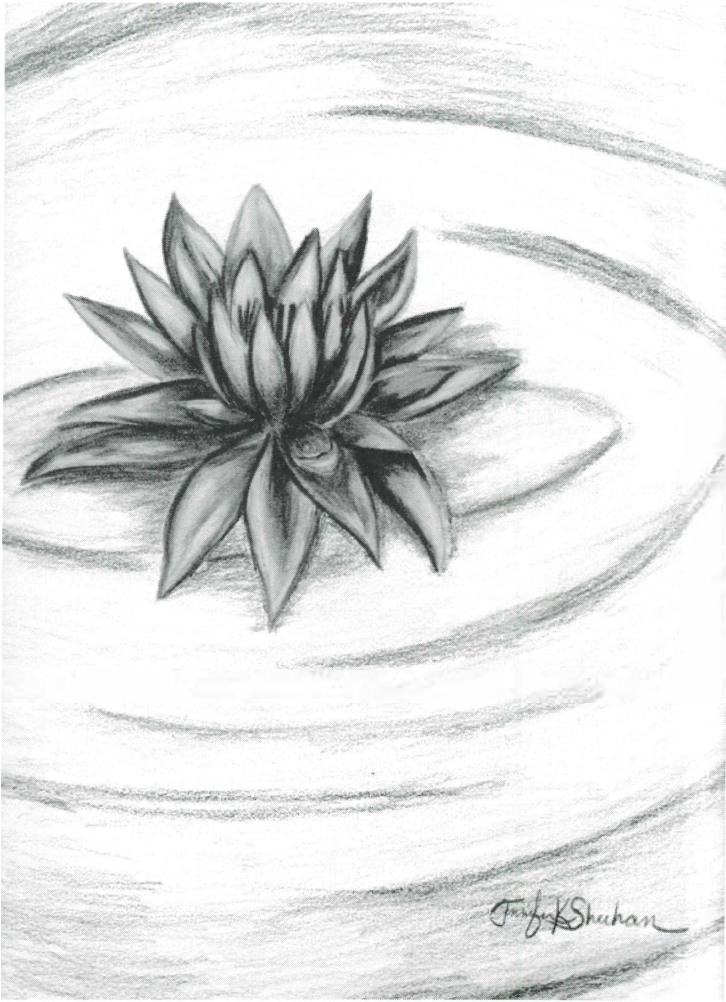
Let me know
How it goes
Pay the fines
All the dimes
All the meanings
All the crimes

Felt its silky skin
Admired its exquisiteness
Alluring.
I brought it towards my mouth
My lips parting, trembling
Instantly tasting its sweetness
Recognition.
Suddenly seeing all
The void rapidly growing
Losing all I had
Darkness.
Everything beginning to din
Imperfections becoming clearer.

Jean Arthur Jones

The Angel of Death

The Angel of Death sleeps beside me
At night, her black hair, and dark eyes
Stare at me like photographs I have
Hanging from the wall, she is a skull
Grinning constantly at me, she is smiling
And her eyes flash every time she stares at me
I am in love with her
I want to go where she goes,
Where normal women can never go,
The place where we all meet in the end
The harvest ground, the wet, cold earth...
There is tiredness to this land
And everything in me feels it,
From the way I pour sugar in my coffee
Every morning to the time it takes
For me to close my eyes and remember nothing...
Everything is nothing to that smile you have, though
I want to go and find out where it comes from
Show me.



Jennifer Sheehan
Serenity
Prisma Pencils on paper

April Link

Overtaken

Like the rail
and the roof,
I am overtaken

by the wisteria
on the porch.

The vines tie me
into the new.

This is where
the spine breaks,

that single
point of tension
where I burst and fold.

I change my bracelet
between wrists

and prepare
to move again.

Matt Lawson

Angelis

The angel on the mountain high
may cast his gaze across the tranquil world
seeing grace, purity
yet he will never know the pleasure of the flesh
that apex of ecstasy
when going down
falling from heaven
like grace from an angel's velvety black wings
he will never feel the fire of a life
that wakes You in the night and leaves you begging for more
or how it must be
to live for himself
to ignore the cries of the pleading mass
bathed in the warm white light
he will never know
their cries are echoing down a white marble hall
with no one listening

Matt Lawson

La Naranja

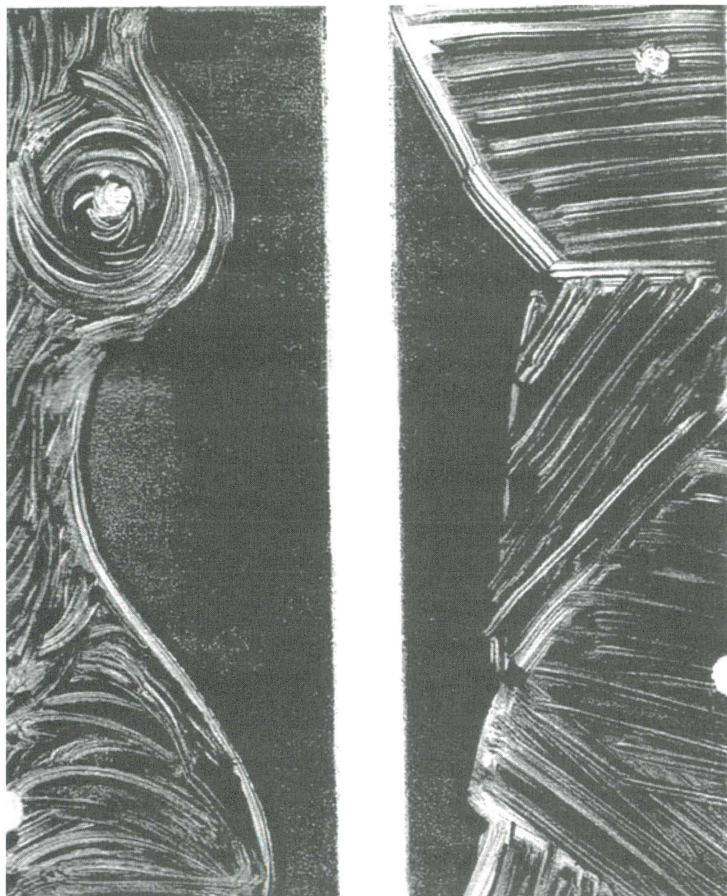
The orange blossom
the father of the fruit
The citrus scent
teasing with the promise of sweet nectar
The peel
rich, ripe, begging to be broken
tangy and tart
it's sections splitting from the rind
juice dripping down your arm
like golden droplets raining from heaven
and a taste
Mystic-Intensive

a big ol' storm came, so big it even had a name,
the man on channel three said its name was Hugo and it should be
taken very seriously so
we all slept in the bathroom and the wind blew and the rain kept
pourin'
and there were loud noises and i had to cover my ears and
all the lights went out and i covered my eyes so nothing could see
me
and in the morning
all the trees were layin' down and parts of the roof were all over the
yard and
my garden was a puddle of mud with petals and leaves floating
around in circles, not at all happy to be all wet and dirty
except for one tiny flower who was hiding under a bush
and since it was scared, i dug it up, put it in a pot, and sat it on my
window sill
so it could still see the sun.

Casey Kallenberg

in my backyard we had a garden

in my backyard we had a garden
and my Momma planted real pretty flowers,
big ones, little ones, bright yellow ones, dark blue ones (almost as
dark
as my room at night with all the lights off and the door cracked just
a little bit,
but never that dark)
and she planted vegetables and they grew up and got real big
but the string beans must not have liked it there
because they grew up the side of the gate
but then Momma would always come with big ol' scissors,
right before they got away,
and she cut off the bad ones that were leading everybody else away
and we'd eat them for supper and
i always watched Momma working in the garden and i wanted a
garden of my own
so one day Momma asked,
"do you want a garden of your own?" and
of course I jumped up and down and clapped my hands and that
afternoon
we made me a garden
and we put a fence around it made out of popsicle sticks all the way
around it
so's you could tell where Momma's garden ended and mine
beggined
but it was easy to tell them apart at first because mine was just a
big ol' square of dirt
but i planted a whole bunch of seeds
just how Momma showed me
and i watered them every day and
i pulled out all the bad plants that stole all the good plants' food
and they weren't even pretty to look at or nothin',
but then i felt bad for yankin'em out of the ground,
so's i would go plant them in the front yard next to the mail box,
and after not too much time at all,
little baby plants came up in my garden and pushed away the dirt
and blinked in the sun
and butterflies came and landed on my flowers
but one night i went to sleep and



Tyler Williams
Masculine/Feminine
print with oil paint on paper

“Damn,” Markus said. “I just talked to him not too long ago.” The group shook their heads in unison and muttered curses at the somber news. Tomas Dolton had been a friend of the groups’ for a long time, went to school with Samuel and some of the others at the very same high school that the loser teenagers crowding up their diner had just gotten out of. More importantly, Tomas had been the front man for a fellow black metal band named “Golgotha”.

“We were supposed to play a show with those guys in a month, what the fuck are they going to do with out lead guitar and vocals, he was what kept that fucking band together!” James yelled, hitting his fist on the table, jarring the ashtray. No one seemed notice or care.

“Well that doesn’t really matter at this point, I just came from his house with his wife and the rest of his band, they’re all pretty torn up over it. It really sucks to be a widow at 26. The wake is going to be the day after tomorrow; I’ll get the address next time I talk to the family,” Samuel said looking over everyone.

“What are they doing with the body?” Lukas asked, grinding out his cigarette in the tray.

“They’re going to have the body cremated and the ashes spread over lake Michigan, like he wanted.” Samuel said.

“Wait,” Markus said, his hand dropping to the table. “That’s not what he fucking wanted, he wanted a fucking Viking funeral and you know it Samuel.” The group looked at Samuel who rolled his eyes and nodded.

“Yeah, he did want one of those, and its even in his damn will but...”

“Tommy had a will?” James interrupted. “He was only like 27.”

“Yeah well, when he got married his lawyer, err, Uncle told him that it would probably be a good idea to have something written out; you know in case something like this happened. Well in it, he actually did mention wanting to be put in a boat and set on fire but his wife doesn’t think that it’s entirely legal, so they’re just going to cremate the body and spread it over the lake.”

“That’s bullshit!” proclaimed Markus, throwing up his hands in disgust. “He told me once that he wanted to use the boat his dad had left him when he died. He said that it was still down at the pier, he even told me that he was going to fix it up just for that fuckin’ reason.”

hair, shitty band shirts, and black vinyl accessories, to their cheap Doc Martin rip offs. Not a real person among them. Over the heads of the giggling, smoking teens, he saw the glass doors swing open as in swaggered Markus, followed closely by Lukas and Abram. The teenagers all turned to look at the strikingly older newcomers, as they walked through the aisles of tacky silver and red 50s patterned booths.

“What up motherfucker,” Markus said walking up to Samuel’s corner and pulling off his leather jacket. All of them looked almost as if they had been cast from the same mold; leather jackets, long hair, black jeans, bullet belts, and tall boots; though each worn in his own way, with odd band patches, painted sleeves, and various sundry chains.

“Where are James and John?” Samuel asked, sliding farther into the corner to make room for his friends.

“They just pulled in right behind us,” Markus said pulling a pack of cigarettes and a lighter from his jacket and depositing them on the table. “They should be here in a sec.” The group squeezed into the booth, lighting cigarettes, and dragging the ashtray into the center of the table.

“So what is this thing that is so important that you couldn’t tell me over the phone?” Markus said, tapping the ash from the end of his smoke.

“I’ll tell you when those two get here.” Samuel said pointing towards their two last compatriots, who were just making their way through the door, the teenage heads turning in unison again. John and James strolled up looking the same as their friends.

“What’s up assholes?” James said.

“Take off your jackets and stay a while,” Samuel said, “I got some sad news.”

“Why, what’s wrong?” James asked. The others cast Samuel a confused look.

“Tommy died yesterday,” Samuel said, slowly shaking his head.

“What!” the group asked in unison; “What?” “When?” “How?” The questions came fast and jumbled.

“Calm the fuck down,” Samuel said. “It happened yesterday, he got hit by a drunk driver on his way home from work; he was wearing his seat belt and everything but the impact caused too much internal damage I guess, and he died on the way to the hospital.”

Last Rites

“Yes, officer, we can explain. Yes, we did steal that boat out there and yes we did set it on fire, as you can see, *and* we broke into that funeral home to get the body that is on that boat right now. But those were his last wishes and damn it, we were the only ones that were willing to give him what he wanted.” The police officer listened with his hand poised to pull his gun from the holster at any moment, his jaw hanging open at the sight of the coffin with its lid pried open, and the gang of leather and silver spike clad freaks; all with long hair and black and white painted faces. He stared at the flaming hulk of the boat that bobbed on the waves as it floated slowly out towards the huge concrete breakers that guarded the harbor. Further off, he could make out the flashing blue lights of the fireboats heading to put it out. Behind him the blue lights of his own squad car were met by more of their own kind, as well as the red flashing of the approaching fire department, but he didn’t notice, he just stood, confused a moment.

“Would you care going over that again, down at the station house?” he asked. More police officers begin to come around the strange group of weirdoes. They all stood with their hands out to the side, wide-eyed and gazing at the steadily increasing police force. The one who had been doing the talking looked around and pursed his lips thoughtfully for a moment.

“Not at all officer” he replied “Not at all.” The cops began to move in.

Samuel sat in the corner booth, casually flipping through the small jukebox menu mounted on the wall. For a 50s diner there was a surprising lack of good 50s music, though Samuel already knew that. The place had hardly changed since he had hung out there back when he went to high school across the street. It was a long shot that they would have changed the records; after all, the Hits of the 50s weren’t going to change anytime soon. He jammed a quarter in the top and punched the numbers for Chuck Berry’s *Rock ‘N’ Roll Music*, the best song on the list, and leaned back to watch the door. Samuel sat waiting for the rest of his band mates to come in. His old high school from across the street had just let out for the day, and the restaurant was a buzz with young teens striving to be as individual and rebellious as Hot Topic would allow them to be. Samuel hated them all silently - from their dyed



Lindsay Hess
Thai Bananas
Black and White Photograph

Morning Sickness

The smell of the morning coffee woke him. It had been days since he had seen her last and all he wanted to do was to touch her sweet vanilla scented skin. He rose from his sun warmed bed and slipped his coarse feet into his velvet soft slippers. The air in the house was cold and he could smell a mix of her perfume, cheap cologne, and stale cigarettes as he entered the kitchen. The smell caught his nose and reminded him of Terry from accounting. He knew of Terry's reputation and how she always would try to seduce him at the water cooler. He knew that she never smoked cigarettes unless she was worried.

"Hello," he said in his hoarse morning voice.

"Hey baby," she said without looking up from the week old newspaper that she was reading. There was something different about her he could see. Her hair was shorter and her eyes weren't as blue.

"Well aren't you going to hug me hello?" he said in a tone that showed his excitement.

"Yeah, I guess," she said as she slowly crossed the room, with her eyes still on the week old paper. Her arms didn't feel the same around him. He could tell that something was wrong with her.

"You ok sweetie?" he asked as he poured himself a cup of coffee. The kitchen was bright with the sunlight streaming in and reflecting off the crystal in the corner cabinet.

"Yeah, well, there is this thing," she said finally looking up from the paper. Her blue eyes caught the sun and he could see that she had been crying. He didn't know what to say to her. She was the type to hide her tears, which always bothered him. She looked tired, as if she had been up for days. He looked at her left hand and saw that her wedding band was missing.

"Let me guess, you want a divorce," he says as he looked out the window at the garden.

"I've been meaning to tell you honey, but I don't love you anymore," she said in a stern voice. He had known for months that the end was coming. She hadn't been the same since they left the clinic. He had prepared himself for this moment for months.

"Well, I get the dog," he said as he poured himself another cup of coffee.

Sarah Rhodes

Remember the Onion

As reliable as an onion in the compost
That makes the entire croft kitchen smell,
I will remember my time spent here,
In Brunnenburg, Italy, beside a small
Town called Dorf Tirol, in the Italian Alps.

As pale as a palm branch in a hurricane
I tremble at the thought of going home.
All the time spent trying to adjust,
Will be tossed away on a passing breeze
And I will be home again, and remember the onion.

Tony Rashid

Untitled

the sun threw stones
fit for rings
across the snow

you were quick
to notice how it
sparkled i thought of your
eyes but said nothing

i felt your hand across my back
moving without disruption
like a rake over sand leaving

only smiles
the ones you like
i've still got a few left

Andy Reynolds

The Red Hand Of Ulster

In the counties Ulster, Northern Ireland
I asked my father of the red handed flag
large enough to send away the unwanted
confused

When the untouched soil of
Ulster was promised to the first
man aboard who laid his hand upon it
one blade pressed through wrist until dying
flesh for bone could be thrown to the shore

just yards off
I imagined the silence on the deck

Andrew Potter

Moose Pass

Walking train tracks:
Arms outstretched
To a cloudy sky.

Sitting in moss,
Passing a whiskey bottle,
Laughs bellow into silent dusk.

A harmonica twangs,
Between cigarette coughs,
the Mosquitoes hum.

She sits quiet,
Feet too close to the fire
Watching the light dance.

Andrew Potter

Crescent lake #2

Alone on a pebble beach:
Writing letters home,
Swatting mosquitoes.

Skipping stones:
In the reflection of a mountain
Sparrows swirl above.

Whittling driftwood:
Making a feeble spear,
Chasing salmon shadows.

Rivers that flow from Mountain Mists of the Past prove this.

Fire burns inside of us, consuming us, call it our desires.
Earth is the battleground to quench this searing threat.
Water is what we need, though the path is long and hard,
But we chase the elusive mystery of the Wind,
Thinking it is the magic key to succeed in our desires.

Sean O'Donnell

Pillar of Salt

I am over the mountain now and each step I take is the farthest I've ever been from home. Then the noises start. Screams, the kind of screams that come from pain and fear never felt so intensely before. The kind of screams where adults are reverted back to powerless children and those whose hearts are made of steel melt into water. The screams are soon outdone by the sound of crackling that fills my ears and will not leave. I feel the heat pressing up against my back like a giant thumb. The rocks of white and gray now are red with life. My shadow is only a whisper. I hear a scream, it cries out above the crackling but it is soft in my ear. I hear my name. My name runs through my head and pulls my resolve out from inside me. My head turns to see. My home town is under a hill of flames. Though it is too far away I see the market where mother used to buy bread, the bazaar where father once bought me a miniature ivory camel, and the temple where Lot and I were married, are all consumed by the avarice of the flames. I begin to cry, but the heat is so intense that it turns to salt. The tears can't pass out of my eyes, so the salt works its way back into my eyes. The salt fills my eyes and pours itself into my heart; from there it attacks the four corners of my body. My head is the last to go, my consciousness slowly turning into grit and grain.

Kime Neal

Wanderer

The Wanderer lightly begins a song
Of all the paths they've seen and met,
Followed, Crossed, thought of, or left.
Continues on, not knowing why.

Listen to the rain falling all in a day,
Watching the sun rise and decline,
Sensing the Storm before it arrives.
Feel the wind breathe and change.

Find the happiness of friendship,
Meet true love, shared, renewed.
Then the cold of loss, regret,
Pain in the heart of things not had.

Blinded by sudden emotions,
Then turn to have the lack thereof.
Hear the wave curve suddenly,
Drop off into the cold deep blue.

A Wanderer still must sing,
Of all that was, is, and might be:

*Dream of walking on the moon,
Laced with a crown of stars,
But the Shadow lingers on,
Seeped in the surrender of the sun.*

All that is or can feel good,
Can also be laced in pain.

Blessed little ones, why hurry?
Dance now with ignorance of youth.
Lie for a moment in this hour,
Clutch it to your soul, never release it.

The Future lays in Mist which holds possibilities.
All we know is what we have or what we've lost.
We want everything, but if pursued, will gain nothing.

Jennifer Sweeney

Of Mary

Old woman
With young eyes
Light, musical voice
Full of laughter
Full of life
She speaks to my
 Poet's soul
A guide to
 Dante, Pound, Cavallcanti
A guide to
 Living as full a life as possible
Pushes for knowledge –
Soft Italian cracking across
My mind's thought
Soft laughter spilling
Across our mistakes –
Small smile for our blunders –
And a wonderful nod of
Silver colored tendrils as we
Pick up the correct accent.
Hands flash as she explains
Weaving words, images into
Thoughts – telling us our
Duty – our duty as poets
 And people.

"Quit your bitching," Markus said. "We knew what we were getting into well before we did it."

"True." James trailed off. "I'll get over it eventually... My parents might not but Hey, I will." The onlookers on the street began to stare at the odd group of leather geared, painted up band mates, some completely ignoring where they were going, to look at them, while other people began walking into and over each other. No one in the group gave them a second thought, they were used to this reaction, wherever they went.

"Check this out!" Samuel exclaimed, walking over to the newspaper box and pointing at it, the headline behind the glass pronouncing "*Metal Occultists Burn Sacrifice On Lake*" followed by a fuzzy picture of the burning boat from the night before.

"Ha!" Markus blurted out. "That - is fucking awesome. I always wanted to live forever!" The rest of the band laughed. "I'm going to have to pick up a copy of that later."

"Later?" James asked.

"Yeah later..." Markus replied, pulling his crumpled cigarettes from his pocket and removing his silver lighter. "Right now I'm pretty fucking hungry, and as I recall, there is in fact a twenty-four hour diner a couple of blocks from here."

"Yeah... I think there is," Abram said nodding his head southward.

"And after that..." Markus went on, lighting his smoke, "we have got to go back to the lake front and get our shit, it should be safe. I do believe it's still a crime scene."

"Sounds good to me," Samuel declared, as the group began to head down the street towards the diner.

"So..." Markus said as they moved on. "Any regrets?"

"No..." they all said almost together. Markus chuckled.

"Excellent." Markus laughed. "Just as long as you assholes don't forget about me when it's *my* time."

Samuel laughed, and replied. "Don't worry bout it, we won't forget - we may not go *quite* this crazy, but we definitely won't forget."

"Good," Markus said. "Good, that's all I'm gonna ask." The group walked on down the street laughing and teasing each other, the passers by holding their papers, gawking at them in their loud early morning revelry.

the headstock of Tommy's SG resting on his chest, just below the Mjolner pendant. Markus paused a moment, looking down over his departed friend.

"Give me the can," he said, as James reached down and grabbed the large plastic gas container that had been resting next to the fence, and handed it to Markus. Markus popped the plastic cap off the nozzle and hesitated, looking at his friends. Samuel nodded, and Markus began to pour the gasoline slowly over Tommy's body, making sure not to splash himself with it. He poured it over the entire cabin and out the small door to the small stern, then handed the can back to James as he jumped over the railing. John handed him the torch they had made the previous day out of an old table leg and close to a dozen feet of old hemp rope. Markus emptied the last of the gasoline over the rope's end and tossed the empty can to the side. The six men lined up along the railing, Samuel held out his lighter and lit the torch and Markus held it high over his head, climbing up the railing as far as he could, one of his feet on the top rung, the other on the rung directly below it. Abram and John cut the ropes securing the boat to the railing, and the boat began to drift away slowly, turning out into the lake.

"Tomas..." Markus began, "We commit your body to the flame." Markus tossed the burning torch onto the deck of the bobbing ship, and the fire raced across the surface in less than an instant, engulfing the cabin, and swallowing the deck. "As you were born, forged in Wotan's fire, so you shall return in death, to the sparks of his anvil." Markus stepped down from the railing as the boat continued to float freely away from them, as they watched it in silence - thinking, reflecting, bathed in the sharp glow of their friend's floating pyre, bright against the night sky. Not a single one kept track of the time, 45 minutes, an hour, or more, they all knew that it was a good while before the wailing sirens broke their spell. By that time the boat was too far out to cast its' light upon their shore. Their duty to death was done, and all they had left was to deal with the laws of the living.

"Well, that was fun, as always," James stated, as the six men walked down the steps of the old Downtown station house, squinting in the bright morning light. "We have two standing court dates - one for the city laws we broke, and one for the owners of the funeral home, thousands of dollars worth of fines, which *none* of us have the money for, oh, and a much longer police record. Fucking awesome." He finished his declaration with a sharp, sarcastic point.

“Now, how are we going to do this?” Lukas asked. “Just put the whole thing on the boat or what?”

“No.” Markus decided. “We do this the right way. Go back into the bed of the truck and get the crowbar in the back.” Lukas headed back to the truck, and returned with the tool. Everyone stood around, waiting for Markus to open Tomas’ coffin.

“Well don’t just stand there like retards, start getting ready!” Markus and Samuel began prying open the coffin lid, as the others began putting on their spiked leather bracers and helping each other to apply their custom corpse paint.

The coffin lid snapped open with a sharp crank from the crowbar that sent Markus falling on his ass; revealing Tommy’s body, dressed in a leather jacket, black jeans, tall boots, and a Bathory shirt. There was a look of peaceful sleep cast upon his face.

“Just like he lived,” Samuel said gazing down into the open casket. “Time for us to get ready now,” he said, helping Markus off the ground. The two prepared with the help of the rest of their band, to get done faster, until they were all leather clad and painted up.

“Come on!” Samuel said, “Let’s get this done.” The others walked over to the coffin, helping Markus and Samuel to lift the body out, carefully carry it over to the shore and up over the wrought iron railing. Markus took him alone onto the rocking boat, laying him down in the small pilothouse, located just behind the boat’s single mast. He looked down over his fallen friend for a moment.

“Damn it,” Markus sighed.

“What?” Lukas asked, leaning over the railing as far as he could.

“He doesn’t have his pendant...” Markus said, reaching around his own neck and pulling off his necklace that bore the symbol of Thor’s hammer, Mjolner. Markus knelt down and slid the necklace over Tomas’s head, centering the hammer on his chest over his heart, and fixing his long brown hair.

“Better,” he said finally. “Alright, give it to me.” Samuel unzipped the black case and pulled out an old sunburst patterned Gibson SG. The paint was well worn from most of the body, the silver pickups corroded and dirty, and the fret board aged and nicked.

Samuel handed the guitar to Markus over the railing, where Markus laid it on Tomas the way a sword is laid upon a knight. Markus placed his hands holding the guitar’s neck, with

“Is that you fucks down there?!” came Markus’s voice as the engine cut out.

“Yeah!” Samuel called back; Lukas and Abram breathed another sigh of relief.

“Well, get your asses up here, we need your help to carry this thing!”

John and James got out of the cab and closed the doors heading around to the back, dropping the tailgate. Lukas, Samuel, Abram and Sara walked over to the truck.

“I see you found him ok,” Sara said, looking over coffin. The group hesitated from pulling the coffin out of the back.

“Hey Sara,” Markus said. “How you doing?”

“I’ve been holding up Mark, but you know...” she trailed off quietly.

“Come to see him one last time, and say good bye?” Markus asked.

“To say goodbye yes, and drop off his guitar, but not to see him. I saw him for the last time today, and that was it. I know I can’t stay around for what you guys have to do to make this work, so I’ll do that now and leave you be.” The coffin was pulled halfway out of the truck.

“Alright guys,” Markus said jumping down from the bed, “let’s give her a moment.” The band of friends backed away and turned around, making sure to not look back until they were confident that everything was alright. Sara walked up to the coffin and rested her head against it, whispering her last goodbyes.

“Ok...” she finally said, with a slight waver in her voice. “Do your thing,” she said, softly, wiping the tears from her cheeks. “Give him what he always wanted.” The group turned back around and walked past her one by one giving her a hug and their condolences.

“We’ll take good care of him,” Markus assured her.

“I know,” she said “I know...Goodbye.” She turned and headed back towards her car. Samuel and the others stood, all calling farewells after her, until her car pulled slowly out of the parking lot and disappeared around the corner and out onto Lakeshore Drive.

“Ok, come on, we got ourselves a job to do,” Markus declared, walking back over to the coffin waiting in the truck bed. The others joined him, the six groaning together as one to pull the heavy weight from the truck bed over the hundred or so feet to the shoreline by the waiting boat.

“Come on!” James said as they emerged from the doorway. “We need your help to get him up there.” John jumped out of the cab of the truck and opened the tailgate of the truck and grabbed one of the side rails. It took all three men lifting in one sharp hoist to slam the coffin onto the bed of the truck and slide it forward.

“All right! Lets get the fuck out of here!” Markus yelled, slamming the tailgate up. James rolled the cart back to the door and pushed it inside, then closed the door. Markus started at him for a second, a puzzled look on his face. “Might as well keep up appearances,” James decided.

“What the fuck ever,” Markus replied. “Come on, let’s go!” James jumped into the passenger seat next to John, who cranked the engine to life. Markus jumped into the bed with the coffin and banged on the top of the cab. “Let’s GO!” The truck pulled out of the drive way and the group sped down the street.

The Captain slammed the door behind him, a scowl carved into his face. The group shifted to look at him coming through the door. He walked to the table and slammed both fists down on it. Hard. The group all flinched at once.

“You fucks,” he said in a low voice, “you fucks are the *luckiest* bunch of assholes I have ever met...” He gazed around quietly for a moment, looking them all in the eyes before saying in a low, almost disheartened voice: “The widow...has chosen...” he sighed, “not to press charges... for some...ridiculous...fucking...reason.” His eyes burned into them all again. Markus smirked. “If looks could kill...” Markus thought to himself. The captain continued: “She said that she just wanted to get past all of this, *however* the funeral home owner is still suing for the damages.” Markus raised an eyebrow.

“So...” he said carefully “what does that mean for the six of us?” The captain looked up at him sneering and took a deep breath.

“Here you go,” Sara said handing the guitar case to Samuel. “This was his favorite guitar, he played it at home all of the time. Part of me wants to keep it around to remember him, the other part likes it better this way, and he would have too.” Samuel gave her a warm smile. Again the parking lot behind them flashed the shoreline with the bright headlights of an approaching car. The group froze again, waiting for a police vehicle of some kind.

“They’re picking him up now,” Samuel said back. “And hopefully, they’re not getting caught.”

The door crashed in with one last kick from Markus. It had only been dead bolted, not truly secured, for those determined enough to get in. Since the days of body snatching were long gone the need to protect the dead had gone with it. Markus stopped and listened for any kind of alarm, but he couldn’t hear one.

“Come on,” he said quietly.

“You sure this is the right part of the building?” James asked hesitantly at the door, as Markus disappeared into the moon-shadowed crematorium.

“Don’t worry,” Markus said twisting the mini maglite to life in his hand, disturbing the dark room with a little stream of light. “I scouted it out at the wake this morning, and I’m sure he’s gonna be here because the actual cremation is supposed to be tomorrow morning.” His light danced over the different caskets lined up along the wall.

“This place is fucking creepy,” James said following close behind.

“Oh shut up you pussy. If you can’t handle one little crematorium you shouldn’t be in a black metal band.” Markus’s light paused on a white wood grain casket, third in line from the feeding line rollers leading into the gaping jaws of the cremation oven. “This is him,” he said lifting and inspecting the large paper tag hanging from the hand railing. “Let’s get him and go”.

“Are you sure?” James said squinting over Markus’s shoulder.

“Yes ‘*Tomas Dolton*’ right here on the tag. Come on, grab the other end.” Markus moved the flashlight to his teeth and grabbed the handrail of one end of the coffin. James grabbed the other end and they hefted with a groan, pulling it up off its platform just enough to drop it back down with a slam that filled the room.

“Whoa, ok,” Markus said taking the flash light from his teeth, “just a little heavier than I remember him...” he shined his light towards the floor. “Well wouldn’t you fucking know it? The damn thing’s got wheels. Now come on, let’s hurry.” Markus stuck the light in his teeth again and the two began to ease the squeaky cart towards the door. Outside John was waiting with the pickup truck they had borrowed from his father, keeping a look out for any signs of law enforcement. James and Markus pushed the coffin out the door and into the side drive where the truck was waiting.

it shut behind them. Markus turned as best he could to the rest of the group.

“Well...” he said to a room full of raised eyebrows, “now the fun begins,” he said with a smile, and Samuel just shook his head.

“Do you ever wonder if we go too far sometimes?” James said, calmly smoking his cigarette. Abram and Lukas looked over at him holding cigarettes of their own. Behind them the lapping waves of Lake Michigan sprayed against the concrete shore. The battered old wooden sailing boat rocked on the waves bumping off the side of the shore. It had been fairly easy to find the boat in the massive lines of docked sporting vessels that sat tied out in the huge harbor of the lake, Sara had told them right about where it was. Luckily it had been tied out in the first line, closest to the shore so it was only a matter of Samuel “borrowing” one of the unguarded row boats, tying a line from the shore to the railing and cutting it loose. Lukas and Abram had provided the pull to the shore, dragging it out along the shoreline past the other boats, to where they could push it out to open water. The whole process had taken about two and a half hours to get to where they stood now; calmly smoking cigarettes close to four in the morning, a scene of the open lake behind them, and the burning lights of the city at night in front of them. They were actually surprised no harbor patrol had caught them yet, or no police had passed by their way doing rounds. Lady Luck seemed to be with them this time.

“Nah” Lukas said. “We only go as far as we need to.”

“That may be the problem...” Samuel sighed. They stood there for a moment in silence, until the bright lights of an approaching car left them squinting.

“Ahh shit!” Lukas said dropping his smoke. “I think we’ve been busted.”

“Nah, calm down,” Samuel said, as the car’s engine clattered out and the lights turned off. “It’s Sara, she said she wanted to do this but she wasn’t sure about it when I talked to her.” The door slammed shut as Sara came walking from the parking lot across the open strip of grass towards the concrete shore, plain clothes, long black hair tied back in a pony tail, a black guitar case slung over her right shoulder.

“Hello guys,” she said, approaching the three men.

“Hey Sara,” Samuel said back. “You brought it I see?”

“Where is everyone else?” she asked stopping in front of the three.

"I have this strangely overwhelming feeling that we've been here before," Samuel said pulling at his handcuffed wrists against the metal frame of the interrogation chair.

"Shut the fuck up," Markus said. "And remember when they come in here, remember what the story is, got it?" The group nodded in unison. They all sat, handcuffed to their chairs, still wearing their black and white corpse paint and their leather spiked bracers. "We knew this was how this was going to turn out so don't worry about it." The steel door burst open, admitting the Precinct Captain and a uniformed officer. The group paused and focused on the freshly arrived inquisitors.

"Well, well, well - you painted up freaks," the captain said walking in and slapping a pile of manila folders down on the metal table in the center of the room. "I pull all your files, and guess what I found?" The band looked at each other, no one saying a word. "I thought you guys looked familiar, and turns out, I was right," the captain went on with a hint of sarcastic glee, "you fucks were involved in that bar riot a year and a half back." The six looked unsurprised, as if they all had known that the riot in question would probably be brought up down the line. "And now we find you six same abominations of nature at the lake front, after just having stolen a corpse from a funeral home that you forced your way into, and then forced your way into the actual coffin, then putting the corpse on a boat that had previously belonged to the deceased in question which was at this point property of the widow, and finally set the boat on fire and pushed it out onto the lake." The six just sat there, giving him back blank stares. Markus smirked. "What the fuck is wrong with you goddamn people!" the captain roared "You monsters got off for that riot, but you are NOT going to fucking get off for any of this, you got me? Your asses are mine, understand? We confirmed with the funeral home that the body stolen was that of Tomas Dolton, just like you freaks told us, and its only a matter of time before we can get the confirmation that the burnt remains pulled from that little fire of yours is the man in question. We've already contacted the widow, what do you freaks think of that!" No one moved or gave any kind of reaction. "Well fine. You idiots can be quiet all you fucking want, but when she gets here, you're all are going to regret the day you were born!" The captain snatched up the folders from the table and tossed them at the other officer in a flurry of papers. "You fuckers just *hang out* here" he quipped with a harsh sarcastic tone. "We'll get right back to you in a sec." The pair walked back out the door, slamming

“Well I don’t know what to tell you man, that is what they’re gonna do. The wife would love to do it for him, but she doesn’t wanna get in trouble.”

“Well, you go back there and you tell her she doesn’t have to get in trouble for it.”

“What are you talking about?” Samuel asked.

“If his own fucking band isn’t going to fucking do anything for him, we fucking will!” Markus said.

“Ahh fuck,” Samuel said, “you love getting us in fucking trouble don’t you Markus?” dropping his forehead to the table.

“I’m with Markus man,” Lukas spoke up. “If his wife don’t want to catch hell, and his own band is too pussy to do nothing about it, he was our friend too and we should do whatever we can for him”

“I agree,” Abram said. One at a time in turn everyone in the booth came to the consensus.

“You guys are gonna be the fuckin’ death of me,” Samuel said. “What the fuck are we gonna do?” he asked, exhaling as he leaned back in the corner.

“Here’s what we do,” Markus started off, before the interruption came.

“Hey are you guys a band?” came an inquisitive young voice from behind them. The group turned to face the teen with short black hair and a pierced eyebrow, carrying a guitar case on his back.

“Not that it’s any of your business, but yes, we fucking are. Now Junior, we’re in the middle of a fucking important issue here, so why don’t you go listen to your *pussy rock* outside,” Markus growled, pointing at the kids brand new Slipknot t-shirt, “while the *adults* are having a conversation! Got it?” The child looked shocked a moment, and stood, frozen in fear.

“Uhh... ok,” he finally stammered as he turned and shuffled back towards a booth filled with his fellow high school students, all looking at the frightening group of leathered out smokers, as if they were a pack of inhuman monsters.

“Alright,” Markus continued, “like I was saying, here’s what’s going to happen. Samuel, you go back to his wife Sara, and you tell her this...” The group looked on and burned their cigarettes as Markus laid out his scheme; the booths full of teenagers tried their hardest and struggled not to look past the band’s corner for the rest of the evening.

Essays on Loneliness

You keep telling yourself that she's gone because if you didn't you'd be right back where you were four weeks ago, ghostly wandering the halls of her old apartment that she decided to leave. Just leave. She left this apartment and you wonder why she left even though she still pays the rent. Is she waiting for something? Does she want to come back? Does your heart still race to think about it? Does your heart race? Was it that bad? Has she left, and she's just waiting for next month when the rental agreement is up, and it can be switched over to your name? You'll write "Her ex" in the space that says "first name." But you never asked for an apartment. Sure it's hard to find a place in the city, but you never wanted an apartment for yourself. You wanted a place that you would be able to depend on. A place you could go to at 5:30; where she would be waiting with arms that would wrap around your waist, and she would listen to what happened at work. She would listen and she wouldn't say anything unless it was the greatest thing you had ever heard in that breathy voice of hers that was low, but not unfeminine. Now you realize that all she said was just great because you had come home at 5:30 from a place that wasn't with her.

The bathroom still has that smell of her freshly washed hair, but you feel like you have to clean the shower with bleach so the mildew will relinquish its hold on the white grout. Her hair, that wonderful smell that used to linger in the hat she would wear when she ran on sunny days – your hat. And you know for days after that smell would remain, and when she wasn't around you might take it to work, and every once in a while, when you needed her to be near, you would stick your nose in that hat, and she would be there next to you. Her legs would be wrapped around you and her hair would be wet and still dripping from the shower. Her arms would be beaded with water condensing in that cold room heated only by her body, and they would collect on your shirt making small tracks of moisture like her arms what would remain around you until warmth took them away.

You move over the white tiles in the shower and you know that if you tried to sing a song right now the knot in your throat would come undone, and your voice might crack. It cracked when you first met her. She was just sitting there behind and all you had to do was turn around to see her. Now just to sit behind

her would be nice. To take a good long look at her. The way her hair falls to the tips of her shoulder blades, lightly poking through her black sweater. That dark hair that smelled so good. Her arms gently sloping down from her shoulders. She might be reading something, or working on something and you know she's smiling because through that small area where her hair falls out from behind her ear you can see that small cheek rounded and flush in happiness. She might turn to you and smile.

You're not part of that happiness anymore, and all you wanted was the chance to write something like this when she was around. When she was around it was all strangeness and new experimentation because you were comfortable and thought nothing would happen to the stable, storybook life that was ever brewing in your mind. Now you praise her, and she'll never know unless, in the distant future, she stumbles across your name in the Barnes and Noble down by the mall in the fiction aisle. Yeah...the fiction aisle. Maybe it might be in the used bookstores by the time she is interested in actually reading it. When the book is new she might sit and read it, but she'll only get a vague sense of obsession that you're all too familiar with, but not because of her. She was the first person you were actually excited to see. She made life livable instead of being a temporary antidote – just being a presence.

The stains around the drain won't come off, and you grabbed the wrong sponge for cleaning in the corners of the shower. They remain darkened by growth and the drain is a strange red color that makes no sense. Nothing red has ever gone down the drain. The bleach is getting to you, and pretty soon your head starts to pound. She might come in now and ask how everything was going. She used to change clothes in front of you because she was that comfortable, and it always made your heart soar just to know that for a short time you were with someone that would tell any secret she had. She would bare herself, her mind and soul, and she wouldn't think twice about it. That's what made the leaving so hard. She gave no indication of anything being wrong, and you think that the one time you started to talk to that guy in the corridor when she was trying to get your attention she might have felt alone. You saw the look in her eye, but it wouldn't have been nice to say, "go away." He wouldn't leave, and you wanted nothing more than to sit down across from her there, and just talk. You would hear that beautiful accent she had, and the poor lack of one you had. You might get to touch her hand, or maybe her knee, or just any air she might exhale in your direction.

You might have found out something that made you love her even more than you ever thought possible, but for now that bleach has set long enough, your lungs hurt, and you open the door.

Good Advice

A lone figure stands beneath the pale fluorescent lighting of the subway station. He paces back and forth, muttering to himself, as late night blends into early morning. Eight hours ago, he signed the papers that would end his marriage. She was gone now, the best and worst thing to ever happen to him. They had spent fifteen years together as husband and wife. Now, apart from her, he was lost.

He begins to talk to himself, this time aloud. "Until death do you part," said the man. He walks to the edge of the platform and stares into the empty space above the rails. Suddenly, he hunches over and empties the contents of his stomach onto the tracks below. "I don't remember having toast today," he says, with a light chuckle, and seats himself against the nearest wall. There is a stain on his suit jacket from his having been sick earlier, and he reeks of liquor and cigarettes. All of which are reminders of having been to too many bars tonight.

The man sits in quiet contemplation. "Until death do you part." The words repeated inside his head. The sky began to lighten. The trains would soon be running. "Until death do you part." The first train came whizzing by. Then, he heard it. It was whisper is his head at first, then a steady chant from his own lips. "Until death..." the noise of the train overpowered the last of his mantra. "Until death."

Once again he stood on the edge of the platform. The next train was coming. He spread his arms and leaned forward. A voice called out from behind him. Surprised, he struggled to regain his balance.

"Let it go."

"What?" He turned to face the stranger.

"Whatever you drop down there, it's gone now. Ain't nothing going to bring it back; you neither, if you keep standing that close to the edge."

"Yeah. You're right." As he straightened his tie and walked toward the daylight, the stranger called out again.

"You going to miss your train," he said.

"That's the idea," replied the man in the suit.

Autumn Is A Lady

Every year she excites you like a lover,
She arrives warm and loving,
As days turn to nights.

She is vibrant change,
that sets you on fire and fills your heart
to overflow.

Her gown is red, gold, and brown.
She casts her veil out
and takes the green as her treasure.
She hides it in her captivating emerald eyes,
For that is where you see her mystique,
And her promise of rebirth, though far away.

Her kisses are the leaves that fall on your face.
Her caress is the breeze that catches you off guard.

Her words are written in the rustle of the trees,
in the crunch of your walks she calls out,
“Come! Play! Live awhile in ME
and know the Joy of a childlike heart!”

And so you dance with her in the wood,
breathe her light in,
and sleep with her in the shadows.

But like all women her love is fleeting.

She is the sunset
that you plead to last a moment longer
and then a moment more
But she fades all the same.

Until all that remains is her memory,
as you stand in Winter’s embrace.

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